

Meeting Minutes for the public hearing for Shared Police Services by
Town of Chester Select Board and Town of Blandford Select Board
January 14, 2019 at Chester Town Hall 15 Middlefield Rd Chester MA.

Barbara Huntoon opens the meeting at 6:30pm. She starts the meeting by thanking Pat Carlino for her years of service as Town Administrator and wishes her well. Barbara introduces Kathe Warden as the new Town Administrator.

John Baldasaro explains that the two Select Boards have been working for over a year with Eric Weiss of Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and Novak Consulting Group to bring this discussion today. He said that Governor Baker and LT Governor Polito are very positive on shared services and that there is a grant opening on January 15, which closes on February 28, to help pay for equipment for shared services. John turns the meeting over to Bill Conner of Novak Consulting.

Bill says that he has met with both the Select Boards and Chief Illnicky about combining both departments and the different levels of service.

Bill explains the primary focus of the study is the potential merger of the Blandford and Chester Police Depts. He explained the different options the towns could explore.

#1 Consolidation of the 2 police departments. He explains that since July the Town of Chester Police Dept has been patrolling for Blandford. While the Chester Police is not the primary the State Police is considered the primary, due to the low crime and call rates this has worked out well. He recommends that an interdepartmental agreement is created and not to merge the two districts, which would have to go through the legislature.

#2 Contract for Police Services Bill explains that this becoming increasing common for small towns to contract police services. Instead of it being a shared dept Blandford would contract to Chester for a number of patrol hours and public office hours. This agreement is more financially equitable for Blandford.

#3 Sharing the Services of Chief of Police Bill explains that the Chief would be shared by both communities, its is an option though not the preferred option.

Bill reviews all the operational issues to be addressed with whatever the option is chosen.

Eric Weiss of PVPC explains that the language of the agreement is important and that it can be amended by both towns at any time. The grant will help pay for the creation of the agreement as well as helping to fix the operational issues.

The meeting is opened to questions, the main concerns are that either town can opt out at any time, the cost to the town and how much it could increase the tax dollar and if it needs to go to town meeting.

Barbara explains that either of the town can opt out and that the municipal agreement is so important. Barbara explains that it doesn't have to go to town meeting for a vote, that it is decided by the Select Boards. If the town people aren't in favor of it then they can vote it down at Town Meeting since it will be a separate line item.

Meeting ended at 7:25pm

There is a copy of the draft presented at this hearing posted on the Town of Chester website.